Letter from Taizé

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An Exchange of Gifts

In this issue, the outer pages relate Brother Alois' visit to Romania. Those few days spent with the different churches of that country are a concrete echo of the *Call for the reconciliation of Christians* which he wrote at the end of the *Letter from Cochabamba*. The account is followed by some examples of different denominations coming together that young Germans have made possible.

The inner pages trace out the way of reconciliation that Brother Roger wanted to open throughout his life, and continue the meditation on the topic of truth in the light of the New Testament.

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ROMANIA

"How can we respond to the new challenges of our societies, notably that of secularization and of mutual understanding between cultures, unless we bring together the gifts of the Holy Spirit placed in all the Christian families?" (*A call for reconciliation*)

In May Brother Alois, accompanied by another brother, visited Romania, at the invitation of the leaders of the different churches.

Every summer since the end of the communist regime, thousands of young people from Romania have been coming to Taizé for a week. The great diversity of the inhabitants of the country is very striking: Orthodox, Latin- and Eastern-rite Catholics, Reformed Christians, Hungarians and Saxons (Germans) from Transylvania... The fact that so many young people come from a predominantly Orthodox country lends a special richness to the gatherings in Taizé. The Romanians are the only Orthodox Christians who speak a romance language. They feel they have a responsibility to be a "bridge" between East and West.

Romania is made up of three provinces, all of which the brothers were able to visit.

Bucharest, the capital of Romania, lies in the south, Wallachia. Even with the lightning-fast arrival of a secularized culture from the West, a great respect for the church remains, as witnessed by the people who stop to venerate a church as they pass by in front of it. Brother Alois took up this theme during his visit:

"Modernity is accelerating the rhythm of life, deeply changing society and our ways of being. The new opportunities that it brings are extraordinary. It is not a question of turning our back on this. But a deeper grounding of our being is essential so that technological and economic progress can go hand in hand with more humanity. Where can we put down our roots? Which source do we live from?"

Bucharest is the seat of the Patriarch of the Romanian Orthodox Church. Brother Alois was welcomed very warmly at the Patriarchate and also by the Roman Catholic Archbishop. Fr. Bordasiu, currently the parish priest of St. Sylvester, who began sending groups to Taizé from Bucharest in 1990, remembered the visits of Brother Grégoire already in the 1970s. In those days that kind of activity was dangerous and they had to be careful to make sure that, for the police, they all stuck to the same story about what he was doing in Romania.

Iaşi is the principle city of Romanian Moldavia. About half of historical Moldova now lies in Romania, the other half forming the Republic of Moldova and parts of Ukraine. Moldova has always been the spiritual heart of the Romanian people. Hundreds of thousands of people make their way to Iaşi each October for the Saint Parascheva pilgrimage. The medieval painted monasteries of the region are famous throughout the world. They have a blending of Gothic and Byzantine architecture which underlines the fact that this is where East meets West, and that these two parts of the Church belong together.

Continued on last page

LISTENING TO THE WORD

Spirit, guide us into all the truth

> **Jesus said to his disciples: I have much more to say to you, more than you can now bear. But when the Spirit of truth comes, he will guide you into all the truth. He will not speak on his own; he will speak only what he hears, and he will tell you what is yet to come. He will glorify me because it is from me that he will receive what he will make known to you. All that belongs to the Father is mine. That is why I said the Spirit will receive from me what he will make known to you. (John 16:12-15)**

When he warns the disciples of his upcoming departure, Jesus reassures them, "I am not burdening you with too much baggage. I have made known to you the essential you must absolutely be familiar with (see John 15:15). So head towards the future with total confidence. In every new situation, the Spirit who will take over from me will reveal to you what you must know of me."

When people leave behind a new religious or philosophical foundation, they are generally concerned to provide careful instructions set down in writing. Jesus acts in a different way. He leaves behind very little, and although what he does leave is irreplaceable, he counts instead on a living person, the Spirit of truth, to remind the disciples of it, to bring it to life and interiorize it. That Spirit will illuminate the meaning of his words by shedding on them the light of his death and resurrection. In that way the Spirit will "glorify" Jesus.

The Spirit will thus lead us neither to brand-new truths nor towards knowledge that will add to what Jesus has already bequeathed us. No, the Spirit will guide us to the fullness of truth from within, giving us a more correct understanding of that truth which is Jesus, making us aware of the impact that it will have in the new situations we are going to face.

No individual or group will ever be able to grasp this truth on their own. To explore it, no human tradition will suffice. We will need Christians from other cultures, other races, Christians with another history, to discover what that inexhaustible truth still holds so that we can root our lives in Christ.

- **Am I ready to recognize that the full truth about Jesus still lies before me, that I still have to let myself be led towards it? What does this change in my way of witnessing to the faith? In my relationship with Christians of other traditions than mine?**
- **On my own humble level, how can I contribute to an ecumenical future in which we shall be better able to witness to Jesus because we are united to one another?**

A PATH OF RECONCILIATION

Brother Roger

On several different occasions, Brother Roger attemp to articulate his vision of Christian unity. In the t *A call for the reconciliation of Christians*, Brot Alois quotes these words of the founder of Taiz

> **Marked by the witness of my grandmothe life, following her I found my own Christ identity by reconciling within myself the faith of my origins with the Mystery of t Catholic faith, without breaking fellowsh with anyone.**

Brother Roger's personal journey begins with an *in reconciliation*. Jesus proclaimed and expressed by his God's love for every human being without excepti Knowing that Jesus had entrusted to the community his disciples the mission to witness to this love, and t over the centuries this community had broken up i fragments that were indifferent or hostile to one ano er, Roger asked himself, when he was still young, w could be done to make it consistent with its message. knew that all by themselves no one could solve all problems, theological and other, that split up the Bo of Christ, the Church. At the same time, faced w the urgent need to communicate the Gospel, rema ing passive was not an option for him. His conclusi let us begin with ourselves, and widen our vision of Church by opening ourselves to the gifts of faith, ho and charity lived by Christians of other traditions.

Brother Roger's option implied a vision of Church quite different from that which peo usually have. We tend to imagine the Christi landscape as made up of different confessio or denominations existing side by side, each c claiming to be the true heir to Christ. But this h man vision is deceptive. Seen with God's eyes, Church can only be one. It is not a reality of co petition but of communion. All those who live communion with God through Christ are led this to live in communion with one another: "I by the love that unites you that all will know t

JANUARY

DAILY READINGS

1 Jn 1:9-12
Thu The Word was the true light that gives light to everyone. To all those who accepted him he gave the right to become children of God.

2 Lk 7:11-17
Fri The people said of Jesus, "A great prophet has risen up among us; God has visited his people."

3 Is 60:1-7
Sat Though night still covers the earth and darkness the peoples, on you the Lord is rising and over you his glory can be seen.

4 Mt 2:1-12
SUN When they saw the star, the wise men were filled with a great joy. As they entered, they saw the child with his mother, Mary, and they knelt down and worshipped him.

5 Ph 3:12-21
Mon Paul writes: I do not consider that I have already made it, but forgetting what is behind and straining towards what is ahead, I press on towards the goal.

6 Ep 3:2-6
Tue EPIPHANY
Paul writes: The mystery of Christ is that all peoples now share the same inheritance, being members of one body, and having received the same promise in Christ Jesus, through the Gospel.

7 1 Co 1:1-9
Wed Paul writes: I continually give thanks to God for you, because of the love he has given you in Christ Jesus.

8 Ps 145
Thu God is trustworthy in all his words and loving in all he does. God supports those who stumble and lifts up those who are bowed down.

9 Jr 31:23-25
Fri The Lord says: I shall give in abundance to the weary and fill those whose strength has gone.

10 Jn 3:22-30
Sat John the Baptist said of Jesus: He must become greater; I must become less.

11 Mk 1:1-8
SUN As it is written in the book of Isaiah, "Prepare the way of the Lord, make his paths straight", John the Baptist was in the desert announcing a baptism of repentance for the forgiveness of sins.

12 Jr 32:37-41
Mon The Lord says: They will be my people and I shall be their God. I shall not cease to do good to them. I shall fill their hearts with faithfulness towards me so that they never turn away from me again.

13 Jn 5:24-26
Tue Jesus said: As the Father has life in himself, so he has granted the Son to have life in himself.

14 Col 2:16-23
Wed Paul writes: Exterior rules are only the shadow of what is to come: the reality is the body of Christ.

15 Ep 1:3-14
Thu In Christ you have heard the word of truth and the good news of your salvation. And having put your trust in it, you have received the mark of the Holy Spirit.

16 Is 51:12-16
Fri The Lord says: I am the one who comforts you. Why then be afraid of mortal beings?

17 Lk 11:33-36
Sat Jesus said: No one lights a lamp and puts it in a place where it will be hidden. Rather, they put it on a lampstand so that those who enter may see the light.

18 Jn 1:35-42
SUN Jesus asked his first disciples, "What do you want?" They answered, "Master, where do you live?" He said to them, "Come, and you will see."

19 Is 44:1-5
Mon The Lord says: Be not afraid, my servant, you whom I have chosen. For I shall pour out water on the thirsty land and streams on the dry ground; I shall pour out my Spirit upon you.

20 Ne 9:9-19
Tue Because of your great compassion, Lord, you did not abandon your people in the desert. The pillar of cloud did not cease to lead them by day, nor did the pillar of fire cease to light their way by night.

21 Ga 4:1-7
Wed God has sent the Spirit of his Son into our hearts, the Spirit who calls out, "Abba, Father!"

22 Lk 18:15-17
Thu Jesus said: Anyone who will not receive the kingdom of God like a little child will never enter it.

23 Is 57:14-19
Fri The Lord says: I have seen my people's rebellious ways, but I shall heal and comfort them.

24 Rm 6:8-14
Sat St. Paul writes: Give yourselves to God as people brought to life from the dead, and give every part of your bodies to God to be instruments of righteousness.

25 Mk 1:16-20
SUN Jesus said to his first disciples, "Follow me and I will make you fishers of people."

26 Jn 12:37-50
Mon Jesus said: Whoever sees me sees the one who sent me.

27 Jr 33:1-3
Tue The Lord says: Call me and I shall answer you, and tell you great and unsearchable things of which you know nothing.

28 Ps 33
Wed The Lord watches over those who rely on his love, to keep them alive in time of famine.

29 Ep 3:1-9
Thu Paul writes: I have been entrusted with proclaiming the immeasurable treasures of Christ to the nations and making plain the plan of the mystery which for ages has been hidden in God.

30 Rm 8:1-11
Fri Paul writes: The law of the Spirit, which gives life in Christ Jesus, has set you free from the law of sin and death.

31 Ph 1:1-11
Sat Paul writes: I pray that your love may abound more and more in knowledge and depth of insight, so that you may be able to discern what is best.

Christ, you penetrate into our inmost depths, and there you perceive an expectation. You know that without having seen you, we love you, and still without seeing you, we give you our trust.

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FEBRUARY

DAILY READINGS

1 Mk 1:21-28
SUN Jesus taught in the synagogue. And his teaching made a deep impression on them because, unlike the scribes, he spoke with authority.

2 Lk 2:22-38
Mon PRESENTATION OF THE LORD When Simeon saw the child Jesus, he praised God and said: Now, Lord, you can let your servant depart in peace. For my eyes have seen the salvation you have prepared for all people to see.

3 Mt 6:25-34
Tue Jesus said: Do not worry about your life. Seek first God's kingdom and his saving justice and all other things will be given to you as well.

4 Ps 73
Wed I stay beside you, Lord, you have grasped me by the right hand and guide me with your counsel.

5 Lk 12:49-53
Thu Jesus said: I have come to bring fire on the earth, and how I wish it were already burning!

6 Ep 4:25-32
Fri Paul writes: Forgive one another, as God in Christ forgave you.

7 Mt 9:36—10:8
Sat Jesus sent out his twelve disciples, saying: Proclaim that the kingdom of heaven is close at hand. Freely you have received, freely give.

8 Mk 1:29-39
SUN Very early, long before dawn, Jesus got up and went to a deserted place and there he prayed. When the disciples found him, he said to them, "Let us go on to the neighbouring towns, so that I may proclaim the message there also."

9 Si 18:8-14
Mon Human compassion extends to neighbours, but God's compassion extends to everyone.

10 Mt 13:31-32
Tue Jesus said: The kingdom of heaven is like a mustard seed which someone took and sowed in their field. Of all seeds it is the smallest, yet once it has grown it is the biggest of plants.

11 Ps 119:81-88
Wed All your commands are trustworthy, Lord; help me, for I am persecuted without cause. True to your faithful love, give me life.

12 Si 30:21-25
Thu Trick the cares that weigh upon you, console your heart, chase sorrow far away, for sorrow is no use to anyone.

13 Rm 8:18-25
Fri All creation retains the hope of being freed from its slavery to corruption in order to enter the glorious freedom of the children of God.

14 Ezk 36:24-27
Sat God says: I will give you a new heart. I will remove the heart of stone from your bodies and give you a heart of flesh. I shall put my Spirit in you.

15 Mk 1:40-45
SUN A leper came to Jesus and said, "If you are willing, you can cleanse me." Filled with compassion, Jesus stretched out his hand and touched him, saying, "I am willing. Be clean!"

16 Mt 13:44-52
Mon Jesus said: The kingdom of heaven is like a trader looking for precious pearls, who on finding one of great value, goes, sells everything he has and buys it.

17 Lk 13:22-30
Tue Jesus said: People will come from east and west, from north and south, and sit down at the feast in the kingdom of God.

18 Ps 142
Wed I pour out my troubles to the Lord. I cry out to you, Lord, and affirm, "You are my refuge, my share in the land of the living."

19 Lk 14:1-14
Thu Jesus said: When you have a dinner, invite the poor, the crippled, the lame and the blind, and you will be blessed, for they have no means to repay you.

20 Mk 11:22-25
Fri Jesus said: When you pray, if you hold anything against anyone, forgive them, and your Father in heaven will forgive your sins.

21 Ga 6:1-10
Sat Bear each other's burdens and in this way you will fulfil the law of Christ.

22 Mk 2:1-12
SUN Four people came, bringing a paralysed man, and they lowered the mat on which he lay in front of Jesus. Jesus, when he saw their faith, said to the paralytic, "My child, your sins are forgiven."

23 Jn 13:31-35
Mon Jesus said: Love one another just as I have loved you. By this, everyone will recognize you as my disciples.

24 Is 25:1-5
Tue Lord, you have been a refuge for the weak, a shelter for the needy in distress.

25 Mt 6:7-15
Wed ASH WEDNESDAY Jesus said: Some think that by using many words in their prayer, they will make themselves heard. Do not be like them; your Father knows what you need before you ask him.

26 Is 52:13—53:12
Thu The will of the Lord will be accomplished through his servant. After all his suffering, he will see the light and be satisfied.

27 Si 7:32-36
Fri Give generously to the poor, so that your blessing may be complete. Let your generosity extend to all the living. Do not turn your back on those who weep.

28 2 P 1:19-21
Sat You do well to pay attention to the word of the prophets, as to a light shining in a dark place, until the day dawns and the morning star rises in your hearts.

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God of peace, by your Holy Spirit you enable us to cross the deserts of the heart and, by your forgiveness, you scatter our faults like the morning mist.

MARCH

DAILY READINGS

1 Mk 1:1-15
SUN Jesus said: The kingdom of God is close at hand. Repent and believe the good news of the Gospel.

2 Lk 12:32-48
Mon Jesus said: Be like people waiting for their master to return, ready to open the door as soon as he comes and knocks.

3 Heb 11:1-10
Tue Faith is the assurance of things we hope for and the certainty of realities that are unseen.

4 Mt 16:24-26
Wed Jesus said: If anyone wants to follow me, let them renounce themselves and take up their cross and follow me.

5 Ph 1:27-30
Thu Paul writes to the Philippians: Stand firm in one spirit. You have been granted the privilege, not only of believing in Christ, but of suffering for him as well.

6 Mi 6:6-8
Fri This is what the Lord wants of you, only this: to act justly, to love kindness and to walk humbly with your God.

7 1 Tm 4:12-16
Sat Paul writes to Timothy: You have in you a spiritual gift which was given to you. Do not neglect it.

8 Mk 9:2-10
SUN Jesus was transfigured in the presence of his disciples. And a cloud covered them with its shadow, and from the cloud a voice came, saying, "This is my beloved Son; listen to him."

9 Ph 2:1-11
Mon Paul writes: Be one in love, one in heart and one in mind; do nothing out of selfish ambition or conceit.

10 Rm 8:28-30
Tue Paul writes: In all things God works for the good of those who love him and who have been called according to his purpose.

11 Lk 14:25-33
Wed Jesus said: Anyone who comes to me without preferring me to their father, mother, wife, children, brothers, sisters, yes and their own life too, cannot be my disciple.

12 Lk 12:32-34
Thu Jesus said: Give to those in need. Provide for yourselves a treasure that will not fail. For where your treasure is, there your heart will be also.

13 Rm 13:8-10
Fri All the commandments can be summed up in this: Love your neighbour as yourself.

14 Lk 5:29-32
Sat Jesus said: It is not the healthy who need a doctor, but the sick. I have come to call not the righteous but sinners to repentance.

15 1 Co 1:22-25
SUN We proclaim Christ crucified, which to the nations is foolishness, but to those whom God has called it is Christ, the strength and the wisdom of God.

16 Ep 4:1-7
Mon With all humility, gentleness and patience, bear with one another in love. Take every care to maintain the unity of the Spirit by the bond of peace.

17 1 Tm 2:1-8
Tue God wants all people to be saved and to reach full knowledge of the truth.

18 1 Co 1:10-13
Wed May there be no divisions among you. Be closely united in mind and thought.

19 Rm 4:18-25
Thu St JOSEPH St. Paul writes: Though there seemed to be no hope, Abraham hoped and believed, being fully convinced that God is able to do what he has promised.

20 Ph 3:7-14
Fri Paul writes: Forgetting what is behind and straining towards what is ahead, I press on towards the goal to win the prize for which God has called me heavenward in Christ Jesus.

21 Jn 14:1-12
Sat Jesus said to his disciples: In my Father's house are many dwelling places; if it were not so, I would have told you. I am going there to prepare a place for you.

22 Jn 3:14-21
SUN God did not send his Son into the world to judge the world, but so that the world might be saved through him. No one who believes in him will be judged.

23 2 Co 8:7-15
Mon Be generous, for you know the generosity of our Lord Jesus Christ who became poor for your sake.

24 Jn 7:25-30
Tue Jesus said: I am not here on my own, but the one who sent me is true. I know him because I am from him and he sent me.

25 Heb 10:5-10
Wed When Christ came into the world, he said, "See, O God, I have come to do your will."

26 Lk 16:1-13
Thu Jesus said: No servant can serve two masters. Either he will hate the one and love the other, or he will be devoted to the one and despise the other. You cannot serve both God and Money.

27 Jn 15:9-17
Fri Jesus said: There is no greater love than to give one's life for those one loves.

28 Heb 12:1-2
Sat Since we are surrounded by such a great cloud of witnesses, let us throw off everything that hinders and the sin that so easily entangles, to run with perseverance the race marked out for us. Let us fix our eyes on Jesus, who leads us in our faith and brings it to perfection.

29 Jn 12:23-26
SUN Jesus said: Anyone who is too attached to their own life will lose it, while anyone who is not attached to their life in this world will keep it for eternal life.

30 Mk 6:30-44
Mon Jesus and his disciples went to a lonely place where they could be by themselves. From every town, people hurried to the place and reached it before them. Seeing the large crowd, Jesus had compassion on them because they were like sheep without a shepherd.

31 Mi 6:1-8
Tue The Lord says: What have I done to you my people? How have I made you tired of me? Answer me! I redeemed you from the house of slavery. Remember and recognise my saving justice.

Holy Spirit, mystery of a presence, you say to each of us: "Why be worried? One thing alone is necessary: a heart attentive to understand that God loves you and always forgives you."

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APRIL

DAILY READINGS

1 Lk 9:46-48
Wed Jesus said: Anyone who welcomes a little child in my name welcomes me; and anyone who welcomes me, welcomes the one who sent me.

2 2 Co 4:8-12
Thu Paul writes: We are hard-pressed on every side, but not crushed; we see no way out, but we never despair. We always carry in our body the death of Jesus, so that the life of Jesus may be revealed there too.

3 Heb 13:17-25
Fri May the God of peace, who brought back from the dead our Lord Jesus Christ, equip you with everything good for doing his will.

4 2 Tm 2:8-13
Sat St. Paul writes: If we have died with Christ, then we shall also live with him.

5 Mk 11:1-10
SUN PALM SUNDAY
Jesus entered Jerusalem, and those who walked in front and those who followed shouted: Hosanna! Blessed is the one who comes in the name of the Lord. Blessed is the Kingdom that is coming!

6 Lk 22:39-46
Mon When they reached the Mount of Olives, Jesus said to his disciples: Pray, so as not to fall into temptation.

7 Ws 1:11-15
Tue God did not make death and takes no pleasure in the destruction of the living. God created all things for life.

8 2 Co 1:8-11
Wed Paul writes: When overburdened to the point of despair, we learnt to rely, not on ourselves, but on God who raises the dead to life.

9 Jn 16:20-22
Thu Before his passion, Jesus said to his disciples: Now you are sad, but I shall see you again and your hearts will be full of joy. And that joy no one shall take from you.

10 Jn 19:23-37
Fri GOOD FRIDAY
Scripture says of Christ: They will look on the one they have pierced.

11 1 P 3:18-22
Sat Christ was put to death in the body and raised to life in the Spirit. And in the Spirit he also went to announce the Gospel to those who once had refused to believe.

12 Lk 24:1-8
SUN EASTER DAY
At the empty tomb, the women were met by two angels who said, "Why do you look for the living among the dead?"

13 Rm 8:1-11
Mon The One who raised Christ Jesus from the dead will also give life to your mortal bodies through his Spirit living in you.

14 Jn 14:27-31
Tue Jesus said to his disciples: Do not let your hearts be troubled and do not be afraid. You heard me say: "I am going away and I will return to you." If you loved me, you would be glad that I am going to the Father, for the Father is greater than I.

15 Mt 24:4-14
Wed Jesus said to his disciples: You will be handed over, but anyone who stands firm to the end will be saved. And this good news of the kingdom will be proclaimed to the whole world.

16 Ph 3:17—4:1
Thu Paul writes: Our citizenship is in heaven. And we eagerly await a saviour from there, the Lord Jesus Christ. So then, my dear brothers and friends, stand firm in the Lord.

17 Ep 5:1-4,8-11
Fri Paul writes: Be imitators of God, as beloved children, and follow Christ by loving as he loved you, giving himself up for us.

18 1 Tm 6:11-16
Sat Paul writes to Timothy: Fight the good fight of faith and win the eternal life to which you were called.

19 Jn 20:19-23
SUN The Risen Christ said to the disciples: "Peace be with you. As the Father sent me, so am I sending you." Then he breathed on them and said, "Receive the Holy Spirit."

20 Jr 17:5-8
Mon The person who trusts in the Lord is like a tree planted by the water: in a year of drought it is untroubled and never ceases to bear fruit.

21 Ps 4
Tue Many keep saying, "Who will give us happiness?" Lord, let the light of your face shine upon us.

22 Mt 5:13-16
Wed Jesus said to his disciples: You are the salt of the earth. But if salt loses its taste, what can make it salty again?

23 2 Co 1:18-24
Thu Paul explained his ministry, saying: We do not want to be masters of your faith, but fellow workers with you for your joy.

24 2 Tm 1:6-18
Fri Paul writes to Timothy: I remind you now to fan into a flame the gift God has placed in you. For God did not give us a spirit of timidity, but a spirit of inward strength, of love and of self-control.

25 1 P 5:1-4
Sat St MARK
Watch over those who are entrusted to you, not simply as a duty, but willingly and with gladness of heart, according to God's will.

26 Lk 24:35-48
SUN The Risen Christ said to the apostles: This is what is written: The Christ will suffer, and rise from the dead on the third day. And repentance and forgiveness of sins will be preached in his name to all nations.

27 Is 61:10-11
Mon As the earth sends up its shoots and a garden lets its seeds sprout, so God will cause justice and praise to spring up.

28 Ps 130
Tue My soul is waiting for the Lord, I rely on his promise; my soul relies on the Lord more than a night-watchman on the coming of dawn.

29 Dt 30:11-14
Wed God's Word is very near to you, it is on your lips and in your heart for you to put it into practice.

30 Ph 2:1-4
Thu Paul writes: Do nothing out of selfish ambition, look not to your own interests but to those of others.

Jesus, we long to live by those words you speak to us in the Gospel: "My peace I leave you; let not your heart be troubled any more."

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ıre my disciples," Jesus tells us (John 13:35).
ıus, rather than conceiving the Church as a plu-
of collectivities with no relationship between
, we need to change our way of seeing to view
a single reality in the process of construction
Ephesians 4:15-16). If each part of the Christian
le has developed better some aspects of the Mys-
of the faith, can we move towards visible unity
out being attentive to the gifts of other spiritual
lies? In the *Call to reconciliation*, Brother Alois
cates some of these gifts lived out in the course of
uries by the historical Churches. By attempting
scover and to deepen them, we prepare a coming
ther which will make the Church more transpar-
o the Gospel that it has to communicate.
orn in a Protestant family, Brother Roger was
o go back behind the divisions of the sixteenth
tury and to rediscover the great Catholic Tradi-
. Very early, he was also attentive to the treas-
of faith of the Eastern Church. In doing this,
ıever wished to break fellowship with anyone or
symbol of repudiation for those who transmit-
the faith to him. Any idea of a "conversion,"
ıange from one denomination to another, was
rly foreign to him. He was always captivated
the words of Jesus "I did not come to abolish,
to fulfill" (Matthew 5:17) and he tried to an-
pate this fulfillment in his personal life as well
n the life of the community he founded.
This reconciliation rooted in the heart must not
ıain an inner reality, of course. If the Church of
rist does not recover its visible unity, how could
pen a way of peace for a world always prey to
nflicts and divisions? For his part, Brother Roger
s convinced that this unity could not simply be
fruit of theological or diplomatic agreements.
st and foremost, it is rooted in prayer. In the *Call*
reconciliation, Brother Alois invites all Christians
a "vigil of reconciliation" held every one or three
nths. He does this in order to emphasize the fact
at Christ is the one who unites us by calling us to
ter into the communion between him and his Fa-
er in the Holy Spirit (see 1 John 1:3; John 14:23).
nly such a communion is able to offer to a world
rn apart the promise of a lasting reconciliation.

REFLECTING ON THE WORD

What are the presuppositions for a true dialogue between Christians of different confessions?

Being in dialogue with Christians of other confessions means learning to become partners rather than adversaries. Dialogue is not a process of making mutual concessions, as in diplomacy. The important thing is to seek together to discover as fully as possible the face of Christ, his will for the world, for the Church, for the entire human family. No tradition can claim to possess everything of Christ. When we become aware of this, we discover that we need one another so that Christ's face can shine with its full splendor. "Christianity," said a theologian of the twentieth century, "is the religion whose distinctive character it is to consider everything along the lines of 'not without others'" The world has an urgent need for what can come from Christians who know how to value their gifts and put them in common. For this reason Brother Alois wrote in the *Call for the reconciliation of Christians*: "How can we respond to the new challenges of our societies, notably that of secularization and of mutual understanding between cultures, unless we bring together the gifts of the Holy Spirit placed in all the Christian families?"

There was a time when a relationship of antagonism determined every encounter between Christians of different denominations. Very little true "dialogue" existed, but instead "monologues side-by-side." Instead of looking for the portion of truth found in the others, people strove to defend the opposite viewpoint at all costs. In that way many caricatures and stereotypes came into being, artificial oppositions from which we still find it hard to escape today. All that has led to mutual impoverishment, not only because the gifts of others are neglected but also because the determination to oppose others causes us to interpret our own tradition in a way that deforms it.

If I do not try to discover others with the best of what they have in them, I am not in dialogue. I have to learn how to listen. I am not asked to deny the truth, to agree with everything. But it may happen that I am called to acknowledge that there can be another way of framing problems, other starting-points and conclusions that have their legitimacy, other words at the service of the faith. The more I am firmly attached to what is essential, the less I will be afraid to accept diverse understandings that do not threaten that essential.

To dialogue as partners we must learn not to find our identity in isolation or in opposition to others, but in relationship and sharing. That resembles life much more closely!

The brothers were very warmly welcomed in Iaşi by the Catholic Bishop; the new Orthodox Metropolitan had not yet arrived in the city. A vigil prayer led by the young people of the diocese took place in the Cathedral.

The next day the brothers were able to visit the mother of Luminița Solcan, the young woman who so tragically ended Brother Roger's life in August 2005. Accompanied by a priest who knows her well, the brothers were able to express their sympathy with this mother whose life has been shattered by what happened to her daughter.

During the evening prayer at the cathedral, Brother Alois repeated the prayer that he said during Brother Roger's funeral. "God of goodness, we entrust to your forgiveness Luminița Solcan, who in an act of illness put an end to the life of our Brother Roger. With Christ on the cross we say: Father, forgive her, she does not know what she has done. Holy Spirit, we pray to you for the people of Romania and for the young Romanians who are so well loved in Taizé."

Brother Alois was invited to come to Cluj by His Eminence Bartolomeu, the Orthodox Metropolitan. Transylvania has a long history of multiculturalism; it is home to Romanians, Hungarians, Saxons, gypsies and other peoples. Its links with central Europe give it a different flavor from the rest of Romania, to the south and east of the Carpathian Mountains.

A whole weekend was planned in Cluj, with young people coming from throughout Transylvania, from other parts of Romania, from Hungary, Austria and even further afield. On Friday a simple prayer with a family atmosphere took place in the Reformed Church. It was there that the young pastor first started bringing groups of young people to Taizé in the early 1990s. Hungarians and Romanians had started to meet together and prepare vigils of reconciliation, until they decided it was important to go and pray in other churches too.

On the Saturday there were workshops: a Bible meditation by Brother Alois about the disciples on the road to Emmaus, at the Greek Catholic cathedral, still under construction; a visit to four landmark churches of the city; discovering icons with a local priest whose passion is sacred art – both modern and ancient. Father Bizau told the young people: "Taizé has played a very important role in the rediscovery of icons, in the West, but also here in the East. Some young people see a reproduction of an authentic icon for the first time on visiting Taizé: The Trinity of Rublev, The Coptic (Egyptian) icon of Jesus and the Believer (The Abbot Menas), the Mother of God of Vladimir ..."

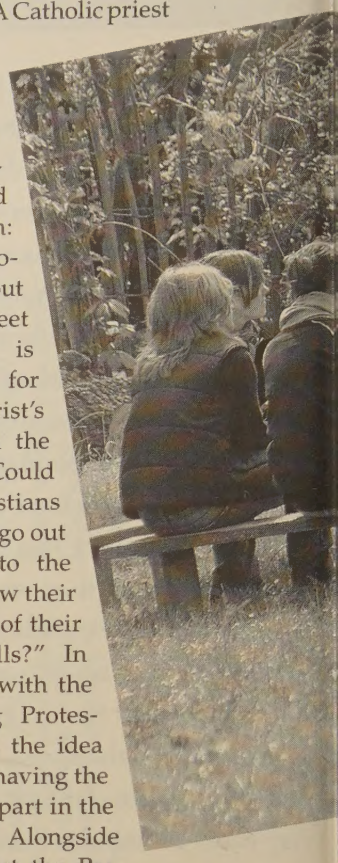
The beautiful celebration of Orthodox Vespers in the Metropolitan Cathedral was followed in the late evening by a vigil prayer with the songs of Taizé in the historic church of St. Michael in the centre of the city – the easternmost Gothic church in Europe.

GERMANY

"Then the desire will grow to do together all that can be done." (*A call for reconciliation*)

Veronika, 19 years old, and Alexandra, 18, came to Taizé with a group from Frankfurt-am-Oder, not far from the Polish border. Although the trip has been organized for many years by the Catholic parish, many young people from other denominations take part. After one of the first visits, the desire was born to prepare a prayer together so that the experience of Taizé could last. This prayer is held each week and has become ecumenical. In Germany many people live side-by-side with Christians of other confessions in their family or circle of friends. For this reason, reconciliation is a topic of everyday life. Alexandra has found that, in daily life, the differences between Christians play almost no role. She is active in the Catholic parish and has friends of different denominations – Protestants as well as Coptic Orthodox and Syriac Orthodox Christians. Others go to different evangelical churches or to the Baptist congregation. "Since we are friends, we visit one another," said Alexandra. "There are many opportunities for this: a prayer with the songs of Taizé, youth groups, the concerts held by the young Baptists..." Once a year, everywhere in Germany a "*Nacht der Lichter*," a "night of lights" takes place in a large church. Young people from very different backgrounds come to this prayer vigil. By working together they go beyond more than one barrier between Christians, and even within their own denomination. For Veronika this collaboration is important: "If we Christians are not in agreement among ourselves, how could we be in agreement with others? When I say that I am Christian, I am often asked: are you Catholic or Protestant? And then very quickly prejudices arise. That is not the reason Christianity exists. God wants us to form one communion and to become a sign of his love for all. Even if we meet together in different places for worship on Sunday, we can still remember that it is together that we make the Gospel message audible."

A Protestant pastor from the North of Germany came up with a humble but significant act: including Christians of other confessions in his intercession. In his parish people pray every Sunday for the Christians who are meeting at the same time in other places. And there is no lack of occasions to give common witness to "the gifts of the Holy Spirit placed in all the Christian families." Some find very creative ways of doing this. A Catholic priest spoke in this respect of the Corpus Christi procession held in his parish: "The Catholics go out into the street with what is important for them, Christ's presence in the Eucharist. Could not all Christians in the town go out together into the street to show their joy, outside of their church walls?" In a dialogue with the neighboring Protestant parish, the idea came up of having the pastor take part in the procession. Alongside the Eucharist the Protestants now carry the Bible, a sign of God's presence in his Word.



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